

EVAN HOCHBERG
PRO BONO HALL OF FAME, FIELD BUILDER



Evan Hochberg has been inducted into the Pro Bono Hall of Fame for his role as a leader of the pro bono movement. After an eight-year stint at Deloitte, most recently as national director of corporate citizenship, Evan recently announced his new role as Chief Strategy Officer for United Way Worldwide. A Taproot Foundation board member emeritus, Evan has been an architect of the pro bono field since its inception, playing critical role in developing systems for measuring the ROI of pro bono and is a driving force behind the monumental Billion + Change campaign. Taproot founder Aaron Hurst sat down with Evan to discuss how he got started in the pro bono field and what we can expect from the future of the movement.

What was your pro bono “aha” moment?

My pro bono “aha” moment was around capacity building. I knew that high performing organizations were needed to solve social problems, but I saw nonprofits and for-profits alike struggling to secure enough resources to accomplish their goals.

It gradually became clear to me the bar was too low for how nonprofits engaged corporations. Traditional approaches didn’t allow nonprofits to access the best that companies had to offer. The two ideas of moving the needle on capacity building and improving corporate engagement came together for me in the idea that pro bono was in and of itself a major solution for our country and our world.

How did you take your first step towards pro bono?

Earlier in my career, I ran a nonprofit management consulting firm. We constantly applied for-profit models and encouraged private sector leaders to come in and help nonprofits build an earned income or marketing strategy. I saw how important it was to use corporate intellectual capital and to look to the private sector as a resource.

Sounds like you were applying pro bono principles early on in your career. How did that translate to your role at Deloitte?

My interview process with Deloitte was another step toward pro bono. My hiring manager gave me the nicest compliment I’ve ever received when he told me that I talked to him like an architect, in contrast to the other candidates, who sounded like builders.

I had enough experience in the nonprofit sector to see how impactful a world class professional services firm could be. I envisioned that Deloitte could be a teaching community, driven by pro bono, and in-house intellectual capital.

Many private sector companies stick to traditional corporate philanthropy, why didn’t you steer Deloitte in that direction?

I wasn’t attracted to traditional corporate philanthropy, but instead to the ways that our world class professional services firm could develop a strategy around capacity building and pro bono. The idea of

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building the capacity of leading social sector initiatives by doing what we did best was the cornerstone of a signature strategy for us. That drove everything else.

The bar is low for how our society values the donation of time. Volunteerism in corporate America is predominately seen as an employee benefit. Employers think, "Our employees work hard, let's give them something nice to do that's fun, and give them a free t-shirt."

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Helping nonprofits by doing what you do best sounds like a win to me. What did your colleagues at Deloitte think about it?

I was passionate about our new model and so was everyone I talked to, from our CEO, to the tax executive committee, to the local staff at each office I visited. There was energy in every meeting and it snowballed because it was so clearly the right thing to do for the organization.

What is the Deloitte model to best drive social impact?

Ultimately, we determined that we were best off setting up a system that allowed us to engage with community organizations in exactly the same way we do with paid clients. That would really enable us to deliver the highest quality, the best of Deloitte.

We were already a leading corporate citizen, and had one of the world's largest days of volunteerism. But what we were putting together would be exponentially more socially impactful, because we could actually help influence billions of dollars of pro bono. From a social impact standpoint, that was extremely compelling.

So, corporate volunteerism should focus on societal impact instead of just being a fun thing for employees to do?

The field was and still is in a place where companies need to ask themselves whether they are doing volunteerism because it's fun for employees or is it something more than that? And if it's more than that, is it about impact? And if it's about impact, how do we get the most impact out of our time?

If you start going through those questions, you will always end at pro bono. It is the highest social impact value of time.

The nonprofit and philanthropic worlds have to demand pro bono as a way of solving their problems and accomplishing their missions. Although we are far from it now, I believe companies will ultimately define themselves by how well they have operationalized their best assets to be deployed against social impact.